

# THE SCHOOLMASTER'S LETTERS

At sunset the schoolmaster went up to his room to write a letter to her. He always wrote to her at the same time—when the red waves of the sunset, flaming over the sea, surged in at the little curtainless window and flowed over the pages he wrote on. The light was rose-red and imperial and spiritual, like his love for her, and seemed almost to dye the words of the letters in its own splendid hues—the letters to her which she never was to see, whose words her eyes never were to read, and whose love and golden fancy and rainbow dreams never were to be so much as known by her.

And it was because she never was to see them that he dared to write them, straight out of his full heart, taking the exquisite pleasure of so telling her what he never could permit himself to tell her face to face. Every evening he wrote thus to her, and the hour so spent glorified the entire day. The rest of the hours—all the other hours of the commonplace day—he was merely a poor schoolmaster with a long struggle before him, one who might not lift his eyes to gaze on a star. But at this hour he was her equal, meeting her soul to soul, telling out as a man might all his great love for her, and wearing the jewel of it on his brow. What wonder, indeed, that the precious hour which made him a king, crowned with a mighty and unselfish passion, was above all things sacred to him? and doubly sacred when, as to-night, it followed upon an hour spent with her? Its mingled delight and pain were almost more than he could bear.

He went through the kitchen and the hall and up the narrow staircase with a glory in his eyes that thus were held from seeing his sordid surroundings. Link Houseman, sprawled out on the platform before the kitchen door, saw him pass with that rapt face, and chuckled. Link was ill enough to look at any time with his sharp freckled features and foxy eyes. When he chuckled his face was that of an unholy imp.

But the schoolmaster took no heed of him. Neither did he heed the girl whom he met in the hall. Her handsome sullen face flushed crimson under the sting of his utter disregard, and her black eyes followed him up the stairs with a look that was not good to see.

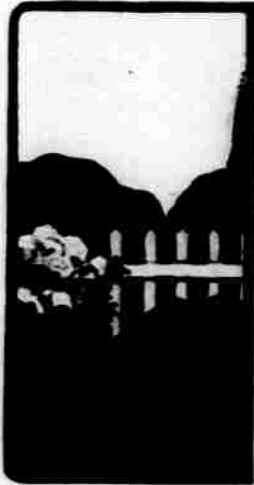
"Sis," whispered Link piercingly, "come out here! I've got a joke to tell you—something about the master and his girl. You ain't to let on to him you know, though. I found it out last night when he was off to the shore. That old key of Uncle Jim's was just the thing. He's a softy, and no mistake."

Up-stairs, in his little room, the schoolmaster was writing his letter. The room was as bare and graceless as all the other rooms of the farmhouse where he had boarded during his term of teaching; but it looked out on the sea and was hung with such priceless tapestry of his iris dreams and visions that it was to him as an apartment in a royal palace. From it he gazed afar on bays that were like great cups of sapphire brimming over with ruby wine for gods to drain, on headlands that were of amethyst, on wide sweeps of sea that were blue and far and mysterious; and ever the moan and call of the ocean's heart came up to his heart as of one great, hopeless love and longing crying out to another love and longing as great and as hopeless. And here, in the rose-radiance of the sunset, with the sea-music in the dim air, he wrote his letter to her.

"My LADY—How beautiful it is to think that there is nothing to prevent my loving you! There is much—everything—to prevent me from telling you that I love you. But nothing has any right to come between my heart and its own: it is permitted me to love you forever and ever and serve

## Jealousy the Love God's Agency to Bring Happiness to a Forlorn Pair

By L. M. MONTGOMERY



"Your Dear Letters!" She Said "They Have Given Me the Right to Speak Out"

and reverence you in secret and silence. For so much, dear, I thank life, even though the price of the permission must always be the secret and the silence.

"I have just come from you, my lady. Your voice is still in my ears; your eyes are still looking into mine, gravely yet half smilingly, sweetly yet half provokingly. Oh, how dear and human and girlish and queenly you are—half saint and half very womanly woman! And how I love you with all there is of me to love—heart and soul and brain, every fiber of body and spirit thrilling to the wonder and marvel and miracle of it! You do not know it, my sweet, and you must never know it. You would not even wish to know it, for I am nothing to you but one of many friends, coming into your life briefly and passing out of it, of no more account to you than a sunshiny hour, a bird's song, a bursting bud in your garden. But the hour and the bird and the flower gave you a little delight in their turn, and when you remembered them once before forgetting, that was their reward and blessing. That is all I ask, dear lady, and I ask that only in my own heart. I am content to love you and be forgotten. It is sweeter to love you and be forgotten than it would be to love any other woman and live in her lifelong remembrance:—so humble has love made me, sweet, so great is my sense of my own unworthiness.

"Yet love must find expression in some fashion, dear, else it is only pain; and hence these letters to you which you will never read. I put all my heart into them: they are the best and highest of me, the buds of a love that can never bloom openly in the sunshine of your life. I weave a chaplet of them, dear, and crown you with it. They will never fade, for such love is eternal.

"It is a whole summer since I first met you. I had been waiting for you all my life before and did not know it. But I knew it when you came and brought with you a sense of completion and fulfillment. This has been the precious year of my life, the turning-point to which all things past tended and all things future must look back. Oh, my dear, I thank you for this year! It has been your royal gift to me, and I shall be rich and great forever because of it. Nothing can ever take it from me, nothing can mar it. It were well to have lived a lifetime of loneliness for such a boon—the price would not be too high. I would not give my one perfect summer for a generation of other men's happiness.

"There are those in the world who would laugh at me, who would pity me, Una. They would say that the love I have poured out in secret at your feet has been wasted; that I am a poor weak fool to squander all my treasure of affection on a woman who does not care for me and who is as far above me as that great white star that is shining over the sea. Oh, my dear, they do not know, they cannot understand. The love I have given you has not left me poorer. It has enriched my life unspeakably: it has opened my eyes and given me the gift of clear vision for those things that matter: it has been as a lamp held before my stumbling feet whereby I have avoided snares and pitfalls of baser passions and unworthy dreams. For

all this I thank you, dear; and for all this surely the utmost that I can give of love and reverence and service is not too much?

"I could not have helped loving you. But if I could have helped it, knowing with just what measure of pain and joy it would brim my cup, I would have chosen to love you, Una. There are those who strive to forget a hopeless love. To me, the greatest misfortune that life could bring would be that I should forget you. I want to remember you always and love you and long for you. That would be unspeakably better than any happiness that could come to me through forgetting.

"Dear lady, good-night. The sun has set; there is now but one fiery dimple on the horizon, as if a golden finger had dented it—now it is gone; the mists are coming up over the sea.

"A kiss on each of your white hands, dear. To-night I am too humble to lift my thoughts to your lips."

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The schoolmaster folded up his letter and held it against his cheek for a little space while he gazed out on the silver-shining sea with his dark eyes full of dreams. Then he took from his shabby trunk a little inlaid box and unlocked it with a twisted silver key. It was full of letters—his letters to Una. The first had been written months ago, in the early promise of a northern spring. They linked together the golden weeks of the summer. Now, in the purple autumn, the box was full, and the schoolmaster's term was nearly ended.

He took out the letters reverently and looked over them, now and then murmuring below his breath some passages scattered through the written pages. He had laid bare his heart in those letters, writing out what he never could have told to her, even if his love had been known and returned, for dead and gone generations of stern repressed forefathers laid their unyielding fingers of reserve on his lips, and the shyness of dreamy, book-bred youth stemmed the language of eye and tone.

"I will love you forever and ever. And even though you know it not, surely such love will hover around you all your life, like an invisible benediction, not understood but dimly felt, guarding you from ill and keeping far from you all things and thoughts of harm and evil!"

"Sometimes I let myself dream. And in those dreams you love me, and we go out to meet life together. I have dreamed that you kissed me—dreamed it so reverently that the dream did your womanhood no wrong. I have dreamed that you put your hands in mine and said: 'I love you.' Oh, the rapture of it!"

"We may give all we will if we do not ask for a return. There should be no barter in love. If, by reason of the greatness of my love for you, I were to ask your love in return, I should be a base creature. It is only because I am content to love and serve for the sake of loving and serving that I have the right to love you."

"I have the memory of a blush of yours—a rose of the years that will bloom forever in my garden of remembrance. To-night you blushed when I came upon you suddenly among the flowers. You were startled—perhaps I had broken too rudely on some girlish musing; and straightway your round, pale curve of cheek and your white arch of brow were made rosy as with the dawn of a beautiful sunrise. I shall see you forever as you looked at that time. In my mad moments I shall dream, knowing all the while that it is only a dream, that you blushed with delight at my coming. I shall be able to picture forevermore how you would look at one you loved."

"To-night the moon was low in the west. It hung over the sea like a shallop of ruddy gold